

CLAIM AMENDMENTS

1-7 (Canceled)

9 ~~8~~. (New) A water craft having an aft region and comprising a main propulsion means located in the aft region of the water craft for propelling the craft in a forward direction, wherein the water craft has first and second opposite sides and further comprises at least first and second steering propulsion devices located in the aft region of the water craft to the first and second sides respectively of the main propulsion means, each steering propulsion device being selectively variable with respect to its propulsion direction, whereby steering of the water craft is continuously provided by the steering propulsion devices without a separate rudder means functionally connected to the main propulsion means, and wherein the output required by the steering propulsion devices is in all less than 50% of the common shaft output of the main propulsion means and of the steering propulsion devices.

10 ~~9~~. (New) A water craft according to claim 8, wherein the water craft has a hull and comprises an even number of steering propulsion devices each having a propeller part that is stationarily located outside the hull of the water craft.

11 ~~10~~. (New) A water craft according to claim 8, wherein the main propulsion means includes a propeller or a water-jet device.

12 ~~11~~. (New) A water craft according to claim 8, wherein the main propulsion means is located substantially centrally between the opposite sides of the water craft and the water craft comprises two steering propulsion devices located laterally of the main propulsion means to opposite respective sides of the main propulsion means.

13 ~~12~~. (New) A water craft according to claim 8, comprising a prime mover and a main propulsion shaft connecting the prime mover to the main propulsion means.

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~~13~~. (New) A water craft according to claim 12, wherein the prime mover is a diesel engine, an electric motor or a gas turbine.

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~~14~~. (New) A water craft according to claim 8, wherein the water craft has a hull and includes a cargo deck above which the hull defines a cargo space, and the steering propulsion devices are installed below the cargo deck.

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~~15~~. (New) A water craft according to claim 14, wherein a maintenance space is defined below the cargo deck and the steering propulsion devices are accessible in the maintenance space for maintenance purposes.

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~~16~~. (New) A method of operating a water craft having an aft region and first and second opposite sides, and comprising a main propulsion means located in the aft region of the water craft for propelling the craft in a forward direction, said method comprising continuously using the main propulsion means exclusively to propel the water craft and not to apply steering force to the water craft, and steering the water craft by applying steering propulsion forces to the water craft at first and second locations in the aft region to the first and second sides respectively of the main propulsion means and by selectively varying the directions of the steering propulsion forces applied to the water craft at said first and second locations.